

March 10, 2013

To: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee Members:

My name is Maria Pukas; I'm the Director of New London Adult and Continuing Education. I'm expressing my support for raised Bill 5493

The Integrated Basic Skill Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Program serves students enrolled in the GED, English as a Second Language, High School Credit Diploma and Adult Basic Education Programs. The I-BEST Program responds to the needs of those marginalized by educational and workforce deficits. The Adult Education teachers and the vocational training instructors develop curriculum and team-teach to ensure mastery of contextualized basic skills. In addition, students support services are provided to eliminate barriers to participation and assure successful completion.

The Department of Labor, community-based organizations, area hospitals and health care providers, and local industries are consulted to assist in the development of our I-BEST program. In New London, we target health, hospitality and service technician occupations that match the local demand and show potential for growth over the next five years.

The most challenging aspect of the I-BEST program is the funding. Numerous students are wait-listed annually for the program. To provide the vocational training, New London Adult Education relies mostly on local fundraisers and the support from local businesses. We have provided I-BEST program for JFES clients when funding is available through the EWIB. Much more could be done if there were resources available to support this initiative.

I-BEST Program Offering in New London:

- **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)**
- **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)**
- **Pharmacy Technician**
- **Emergency Medical Responder (EMR)**
- **Medical Receptionist with Medical Terminology**
- **Automotive Technician**
- **Nail Technician**
- **Hospitality (Culinary Arts and *SMART-certified* Bartenders)**

The following support services are provided:

- **Child-care**
- **Homework Assistance**
- **Tutoring**
- **Study Group**
- **Transportation**
- **Uniforms and Supplies**
- **Program Coordinator and Guidance Counselor**
- **Transition Support Services**
- **Interview Skills Workshops**
- **Completed Portfolio that includes:
Resume, Cover Letter and References**

Community partners are an integral part of this program – The following are some of the participants in our program:

- **CT Works**
- **Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)**
- **Lawrence and Memorial Hospital**
- **Three Rivers Community College**
- **Allied Health and Continuing Ed. Services**
- **Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)**
- **T.V.C.C.A.**
- **City Of New London**
- **Groton Salon and Spa**
- **Meineke Car Care**
- **S.M.A.R.T Programs**
- **Emergency Training Services**
- **Greentree Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center**
- **BeechwoodPost-Acute, Transitional and Long Term Care**

Our data to date:

- **108 students have been served**
- **94% completed the program**
- **88% earned industry credential**
- **67% gained employment**
- **80% earned High School diplomas**
- **77% of program completers scored 4-point gain or above on the CASAS testing.**

The I-BEST/Contextualized Learning Program provides an opportunity for those students that are basic skills deficient to successfully complete High School and/or gain English language proficiency while participating in vocational training. Upon graduation, students are ready to join the workforce or transition to higher education. Our data shows that the program is a great success, positively impacting the lives of many families.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support for the Contextualized Learning Program – I-BEST.